

Guide to various programs FWP pulled money from to buy land

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By EVE BYRON Independent Record helenair.com | Posted: Sunday, January 16, 2011 12:00 am

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One of the driving forces for land purchases by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in recent years is the Access Montana program, which is a \$10 million fund created by the 2007 Legislature. Its purpose is to buy property to improve access to state and federal lands and help reduce the conflicts that arise when sportsmen use public lands. So far, \$9.3 million of that has been spent.

Forest Legacy Program

The state also is using the Forest Legacy Program, which partners with the U.S. Forest Service to purchase wildlife habitat. Since 2004, more than \$11 million in federal funding has been paired with land donations and state funds to purchase former Plum Creek Timber Co. land, mainly in the Blackfoot and Swan valleys.

Private donations

In addition, more people than ever are donating land to the state in recent years, with more than 8,000 acres being given to FWP for state parks, wildlife management areas and fishing sites valued at almost \$15.7 million.

Habitat Montana

With the 1987 Habitat Montana legislation, portions of several big game licenses were earmarked for the protection of wildlife habitat, with 92 percent of the revenue coming from nonresident hunters. It raises about \$2.8 million per year for acquiring interests in "important habitat that is seriously threatened." The money is mainly to be used for conservation easements, but fee title purchases are allowed. Since 1993, about \$27 million has been used, sometimes paired with other funding, to purchase in more than 65,000 acres. Twenty percent of the dollars generated by the

legislation — about \$500,000 annually — is used for operation and maintenance of all FWP wildlife lands.

Combination

Two of the largest acquisitions, totaling about 61,000 acres for the Fish Creek and Spotted Dog wildlife management areas, occurred this year. Those purchases, totaling about \$30 million, were paid for through a combination of federal funds, land donations, Habitat Montana monies and the Natural Resources Damage program, comprised of settlement proceeds from the state's lawsuit with Arco.

State wildlife grants

State wildlife grants typically are funding from the federal government passed onto FWP, which has used \$1.3 million since 2006 to purchase land that benefits wildlife and their habitats, including species not hunted or fished.

USFS Native Fish

Habitat Conservation Plan

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Native Fish Habitat Conservation Plan grant program has been used only three times since 2005, but FWP has put \$10.8 million from that funding source into land purchases.

General license fees

General license fees account for about 65 percent of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks budget, ranging from \$24 million to \$42 million annually in the past decade. About \$3.6 million in license fees was used, sometimes in conjunction with other funding sources, to purchase about 6,700 acres.

Pittman-Robertson

Other large funding sources for FWP land purchases include the federal Pittman-Robertson program, which began in July of 1938. Money comes from a federal tax on guns, ammunition and archery equipment and is used to provide money to select, rehabilitate and improve wildlife habitat and research. FWP has used \$13.7 million from this fund since 1993.

Dingell-Johnson Act

and Wallop-Breaux Act

Parallel to Pittman-Robertson are the federal Dingell-Johnson Act and Wallop-Breaux Act. Funding comes from a federal tax on fishing equipment, and provides money for management,

conservation and restoration of fishery resources, and FWP accessed \$265,500 from this source since 1999.

Land and Water

Conservation Fund Act

The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 is for planning and funding outdoor recreation projects. About \$1.3 million has been used by itself or paired with other funding sources since 1993 to purchase property.

Under federal law, the Bonneville Power Administration must mitigate impacts to wildlife and fisheries caused by the development and operation of dams along the Columbia River. Montana FWP has used about \$5.1 million from this source for land acquisition since 1997.

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